

PressRelease

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GTE\Bell Atlantic merger approved Decision includes \$30 million in rate reductions

OLYMPIA — State regulators today approved a merger between two telecommunications giants, GTE Corp. and Bell Atlantic Corp. The decision includes a settlement on GTE's rates that will result in lower phone bills for many of its 870,000 customers in Washington.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) accepted a settlement proposed by GTE\Bell Atlantic, commission staff and the public counsel section of the state Attorney General's office. The settlement addressed the merger as well as other issues including GTE's earnings. Under the terms of the commission's order, GTE will lower its rates by a net \$30 million a year by July 1, 2001.

GTE business customers will notice the biggest reductions in their bills but many residential customers, particularly those paying surcharges for larger local calling areas, will also see a reduction. Some rural customers, paying the lowest rates, will see increases in their local rates but all customers should eventually realize a reduction in their long-distance rates.

GTE provides local and long-distance service to 620,000 residential and 250,000 business customers in Washington. Bell Atlantic is a long-distance provider in Washington but does not offer local service in the state. The merger is still pending approval from the Federal Communications Commission.

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